

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1107

As Reported by House Committee On:
Children & Family Services

Title: An act relating to early intervention services for children with disabilities.

Brief Description: Providing for early intervention services for children with disabilities.

Sponsors: Representatives Dickerson, Talcott, Linville, Tom, Priest, Darneille, Pettigrew, Shabro, Jarrett, McCoy, Roberts, Kagi, Clements, Dunn, Hunter, Quall, Haler, Hinkle, Cody, Walsh, Ormsby, Kilmer, Simpson, Kessler, Morrell, Williams, O'Brien, Chase, Hunt, Schual-Berke, Conway, Santos, Haigh, Upthegrove and B. Sullivan.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Children & Family Services: 1/31/05, 2/2/05 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires school districts to provide or contract for early intervention services to eligible children with disabilities from birth to three years of age.
- Establishes a Birth-to-Three Task Force.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Roberts, Vice Chair; Hinkle, Ranking Minority Member; Walsh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Darneille, Dickerson, Dunn, Haler and Pettigrew.

Staff: Cynthia Forland (786-7152).

Background:

Special education is instruction and related services that are specially designed to meet the unique needs and abilities of students with disabilities. It is provided at no cost to eligible students in the state between three and 21 years of age.

School districts may provide early intervention services to eligible preschool-age children with a disability. School districts that provide these services are entitled to the regular apportionments from state and county school funds, as provided by law, in addition to allocations from state excess cost funds made available for special services for children with disabilities.

If school districts opt to serve eligible preschool-age children, they must do so in the birth-to-three age group under state regulations implementing Part C of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) is the lead state agency responsible for early intervention services to children with a disability in the birth-to-three age group.

Summary of Bill:

By September 1, 2008, each school district is required to provide or contract for early intervention services to all eligible children with disabilities from birth to three years of age. Eligibility must be determined according to Part C of the IDEA and as specified in state regulation.

School districts are required to provide or contract for early intervention services in partnership with local birth-to-three lead agencies and birth-to-three providers. The provided early intervention services must not supplant services or funding currently provided in the state for early intervention services to eligible children with disabilities from birth to three years of age.

The state-designated birth-to-three lead agency must be payor of last resort for provided birth-to-three early intervention services.

There is established a Birth-to-Three Task Force (Task Force) to make recommendations concerning policies, procedures, and regulations in order to ensure implementation of an equitable statewide comprehensive system for all eligible children with disabilities from birth to three years of age.

Members of the Task Force must be jointly appointed by the Governor and the Superintendent of Public Instruction by July 1, 2005, and must include, at a minimum, the following:

- representatives of the following: Special Education Operations within the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction; the Washington Association of School Administrators; the Washington State School Directors' Association; an Educational Service District; a large school district; the Special Education Advisory Council; the Infant Toddler Early Intervention Program within the DSHS; the Developmental Disabilities Section of the Association of County Human Services; the Medical Assistance Administration within the DSHS; the Governor's Head Start State Collaboration Office; the Division of Child Care and Early Learning within the DSHS; the Children with Special Health Care Needs Program within the Department of Health; a local health department/district; an Indian tribe providing early intervention services; the Washington State Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics; the Early Childhood Development Association of Washington; the Neurodevelopmental Centers of Washington; a nonprofit local birth-to-three lead agency, which is not already represented in the membership of the Task Force; and an advocacy group for children with disabilities from birth to three years of age and their families; and

- a Special Education Director from a school district providing early intervention services; a Special Education Director from a school district not providing early intervention services; and four members of the State Interagency Coordinating Council for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities and Their Families, three of whom must be parents.

The Birth-to-Three Task Force is required to submit a report to the Governor and the Superintendent of Public Instruction by December 1, 2006, outlining their recommendations.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Testimony For: (In support) This bill has been before the committee before. This bill is really good for kids. From age birth through three is a critical time to intervene in the life of a child, particularly for children with disabilities. The school districts that are participating in early interventions services love it. They are saving money because children who receive early intervention services often do not need special education services. Families love it as well because parents get the help that they need for their children with disabilities. Early intervention really helps to improve the lives of parents and their children, so that those children can reach their fullest potential. This bill could bring significant resources into local communities to support early intervention services. Communication and coordination of funding among early intervention providers has improved, and now it's time for the last piece of the puzzle, the school districts, so that there will be equity across the state. Transitions are easier when the school districts work with local birth-to-three agencies. We are all aware that early intervention is the key to success for children with disabilities, so it only makes sense for local school districts to take an active role in making sure that these children receive the services that they need. This can only be a win-win situation for kids and schools. The funding that school districts can contribute can help birth-to-three agencies provide services to families and children and give them the tools to transition into successful experiences in their continued education. Many school districts have been providing early intervention services for many years, collaborating to locate and identify children in need of services, linking families to agencies that provide services, and establishing relationships and partnering with families to facilitate transitions into school. School districts and surrounding communities benefit from these youngest students receiving needed interventions. School districts can pass along state and federal funds to other early intervention services providers, as well as help pay for services that school districts provide. At transition at age three, some children are not needing evaluation for special education services. Partnerships with school districts have been very rich and have enhanced families' skills. This legislation means a great deal to families, schools, and taxpayers. We know that early intervention works. Early childhood learning experiences are critical. Nineteen percent of the children who receive early intervention services do not need special education services at age three. Of the children who do go on to special education, 85 percent move into the typical programs in the schools. One of the most

important things for the school districts is that parents are far less adversarial during transition at age three, since the children have already been clients of the school since birth. School district participation brings other monies into the birth-to-three system. The time has come for this legislation. The Superintendent of Public Instruction supports this legislation. On state average, 20 percent of children age three to five who have had birth-to-three services have not needed special education services. School district costs are offset by savings that they can get in state special education spending. Some school districts, particularly small school districts, will see an additional cost, but there are benefits to schools in participating in providing birth-to-three services. These early intervention programs are flexibly designed at the local level, with each county identifying their local lead agency. Currently, approximately 60 percent of school districts offer or are willing to offer early intervention services, serving 80 percent of eligible children in the state, up from 50 percent of school districts and 70 percent of eligible children last year. These children are very vulnerable, as are their families. Seventy percent of children in the birth-to-three program in the state are Medicaid-eligible. This inequity of the non-participating school districts means that the depth and comprehensiveness of services depends on where children live. We need the last, very important piece, of the school districts that do not participate. All sizes of districts are among those participating, as among non-participating districts.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Dickerson, prime sponsor; Cassie Johnston and Cecile Lindquist, WEE CARE Coalition; Debbie Jackson, Parent/Birth-to-Three; Patty Compton, Highline School District; David Lewis, Tacoma School District; Cathy Evans, Parent to Parent Lead Agency; Seth Dawson and Barbara George, Little Red School House; and Greg Williamson, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.